

WESTERN PEOPLE

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COMIC CHESS



WESTERN PEOPLE

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Dandelion

There you are, dandelion,
Immigrant come to stay
You mingle with native flowers
Across pastures, along roadsides
You move to lawns and gardens
Mowed, watered, and fertilized
Your orange-yellow florets dance
Your silver, parachute seeds soar
You thrive but are cursed
Sprayed, pulled, decapitated
You challenge and taunt
Disrupt the controlled order
Daily your roots grow stronger
Deeper into the nourishing soil.

— Trudie Fellner

Unsolicited manuscripts are welcome

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Dear Reader

How stirring. How noisy. How inspiring. How tawdry. Can I have that without olives, please?

You might think that if you've seen one rocket launch you've seen them all, but the Proton-K rocket that lifted off from the windswept steppes of Baikonur, Kazakhstan recently carrying the long-delayed International Space Station's service module also sported a nifty 10-metre high emblem from that giant of the space program, Pizza Hut.

That's the very same Pizza Hut that charges \$18 for a pie and you

swear you could make one just like it at home for next to nothing but you never actually attempt it because it's too much trouble. Besides, it would be impossible to get the grease-to-protein ratio right. Better leave it to the experts at the Hut.

Anyway, there goes this rocket to the stars — well, not exactly to the stars; the space station is only 220 miles from Earth and hence the nearest Pizza Hut. In return for its \$1.25 million investment, the eatery gets to put its name on the Proton-K, hoping, hoping, hoping that the big rocket doesn't keel over on the launch pad or go berserk later on and have to be

blasted out of the sky and rain down pepperoni-shaped bits of fuselage in the Caspian Sea.

Good news for Pizza Hut stock holders: The launch was successful. Bad news for the Russian Space Agency: Only a fraction of that \$1.25 million went to the agency. More than a million went to a Russian advertising company and to two U.S.-based companies that helped arrange the deal.

The Russian space program, and Russia itself, may be mired in debt and crippled by political inaction, but capitalism is alive and growing like a Mark McGwire bicep.

Michael Gillgannon



**Check
out our
photo
contest!**

• Theme: people of Western Canada (one or more people must be prominent in the picture).

• Prizes — \$1,000 for 1st
\$500 for 2nd
\$250 for 3rd
\$150 for 4th
\$100 for 5th

• Entries must be received no later than Aug. 31. Winners will be announced in October.

• Attach your name and address to each entry and identify the subject. Include a self-addressed, stamped envelope for return of material.

• No more than three entries per photographer.

• Photos (prints or slides) must be

recent — Jan. 1, 1998 to the present.

- Income from photography must not exceed 25% of total income.
- By entering you grant permission for your photo(s) to be published in *Western People/Western Producer* and used in promotions or on the website.
- WPP staff and immediate family members are not eligible.

• Send entries to: Photo Contest, *Western People*, Box 2500, Saskatoon, Sask. S7K 2C4

Man of the land

A tribute to August Vion 1927-1999

Memory by Lois Gordon

Forty-nine crop years. He could count and recall each one. Too much rain or too little. Early frosts and early snows. Poor grain prices or gusty storms whose driving hail and winds flattened his crops. But still there was the irrepressible urge each spring to get out onto the fields.

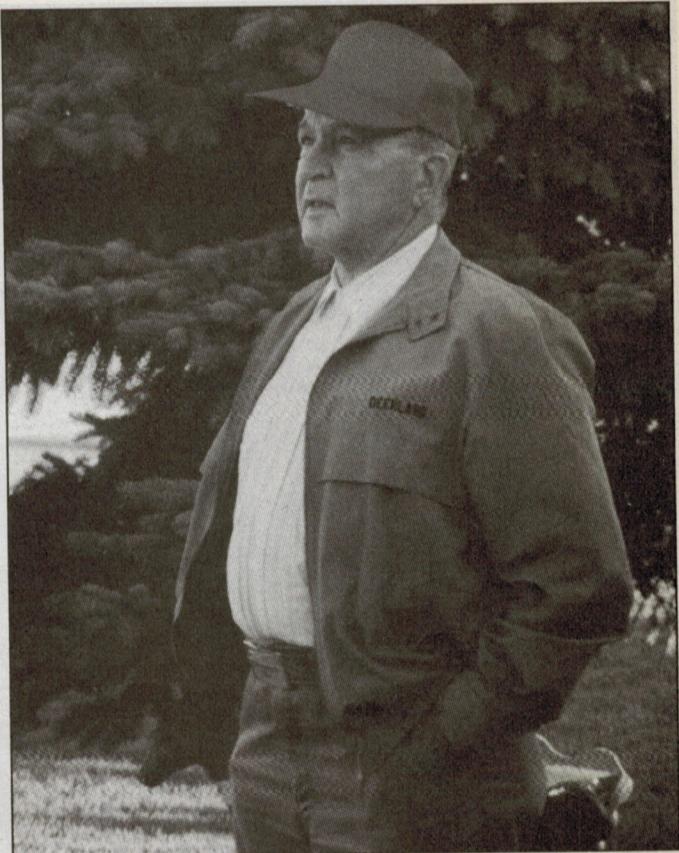
He had moved the last icy drifts away from the snow fence with his farmhand each spring when he grew too impatient for the weak spring sun to melt them. He had waited eagerly for the last pockets of snow to disappear from the fields and the ground to dry so that he could cultivate, harrow and seed the land he knew so well and loved. Each slough and hummock was as familiar as his own hand. He had memorized the hollows where the water would collect and care was needed to navigate the large machinery around soggy soil that sucked at the tires.

And there had been bumper crops and years when grain prices were good. There had been early springs and Indian summer days that brought warm sunshine and breezes that dried the grain and sped the harvest. He had savored the autumn evenings watching the orange sunsets through the dust from the combine and felt an overwhelming sense of pride and relief when the last hopper was emptied.

Each year a little more progress. Each improvement was driven by a perfectionist's vision and each was the reward for long hours of hard work and sweat. Scrub trees cleared and others planted, rocks picked from the fields, and a slough drained. There was a new house and sturdy metal bins had gradually replaced weatherworn wooden granaries. The old barn, its hayloft long empty, was replaced by large metal sheds where he stored the precious machinery of which he was so proud, a large powerful tractor, a newer combine with a cab. His neighbors teased that each time he traded in a piece of equipment, he returned it to the dealership cleaner and more polished than the day it had left the lot.

For 49 years, he had watched the morning train pass by a mile to the east, its red and black engines a striking contrast against the green, golden or white fields. He had seen the county raise his taxes but fail to grade or snowplow his road as often as it should have. And he welcomed new neighbors, young farmers, his neighbors' sons and daughters who had returned to the land.

He had grudgingly tolerated the geese that feasted on his swaths each fall before they made their way south, but he found them a welcome sight when they returned each spring. He had fought the magpies, an occasional skunk, moles that



tunneled under his grass, and porcupines that threatened his pine trees. And while the rest of the world slept, he arose, impatient to start his day, and admired the shy deer and the occasional moose that wandered silently onto his front lawn.

Each winter, he had tried to busy himself with projects. Uncomfortable with his "idle" hands, he would help his children and his neighbors whenever he could. He shoveled snow from his driveway and his roof.

Occasionally, at his wife's urging, he had accepted his married daughter's invitations to visit her in the warm South, but he was always eager to return home. He worried that in his absence the furnace might fail in the bitter cold or thieves might break in, though his neighbors assured him they would "take care of things" for him.

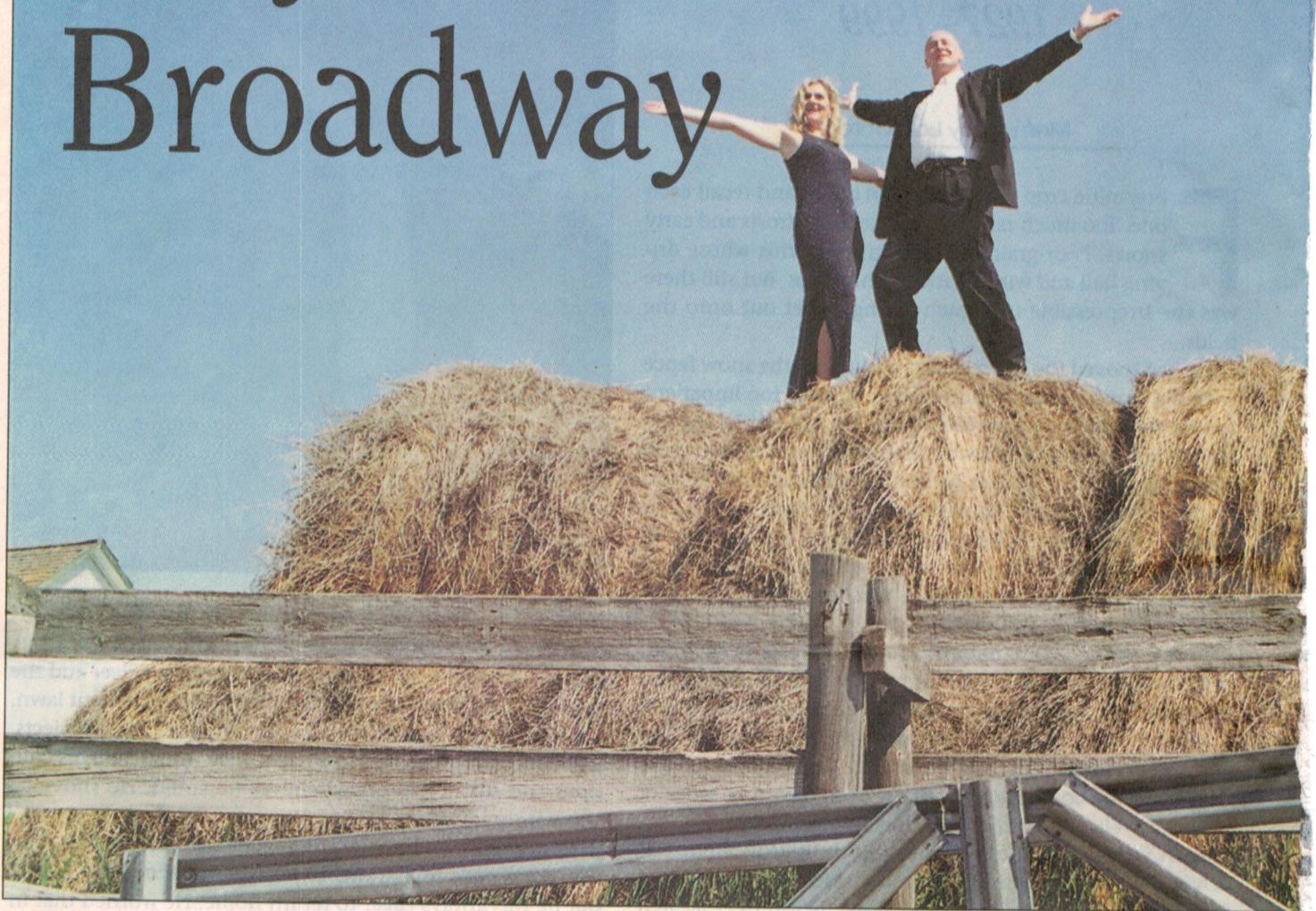
He had worked hard and worried more, but he loved the land and managed it with the skill of a man who has studied his craft and has a true passion for his work. It was what he knew and what brought him joy. His farm was one of those rare achievements, his life's work, admired by his neighbors and passersby for its meticulously kept lawn, symmetrically arranged buildings and black, black summerfallow.

And when it was terribly clear that his 49th crop would be his last, it was a picture of his beloved farm, an aerial photograph brought to the hospital by a friend, that was set at the foot of his bed where he could see it when he opened his tired eyes.

Each time I pass by the Fort Saskatchewan, Alta., farm that I have known and admired all my life — August Vion's farm — I will think of his energy, and his respect and love for the land and I will know that his was a life well spent.

(Lois Gordon, writer and teacher, lives at Bremner, Alta.)

Way off Broadway



Angie Tysseland and Tom Bentley-Fisher are the composer and writer/director of a musical about Biggar, Sask.

By Sheila Robertson

Why can't we just do *Oklahoma* or *The Sound of Music*?" says a character at the beginning of a new play written and directed by Tom Bentley-Fisher. "Because," another character retorts, "they gave us a grant to do something original."

That is the nub of "New York is Big but this is Biggar," a rollicking musical about the community in west-central Saskatchewan staging a play based on its history.

"The process of trying to create the play is the play," Bentley-Fisher

explains over lunch at the pizzeria on Biggar's Main Street.

Art is continually imitating life in this project, for which the Biggar Museum and Gallery received a federal millennium grant of nearly \$13,000. The total budget is \$43,000.

Biggar did well from the Canada Millennium Partnership Program, says Jacqui Moir, business manager of the museum and producer of the musical.

"There were more than 4,000 applicants and 609 got funding."

The Sandra Schmirler Olympic Park in Biggar also received support.

During the three months Bentley-Fisher was in residence writing the play, he invited townspeople to pass on

anecdotes they thought should be in the musical. He was astounded at the response.

"I have a bad back and I've paid regular visits to the chiropractor," he says. "People took to dropping off information for me there." That's the way things work in a community of 2,500, where everyone knows everyone else's routines.

It seemed everyone wanted this year's musical to be "biggar" than ever. Carol Wylie, a visual artist who heads Biggar's summer musical committee, says the town has had a production every year for 18 years.

"Our first musical," she admits with a smile, "was *Oklahoma*." As it hap-



Kevin Brautigam

pens, there are no surreys with fringes in this year's musical, but there are lots of shopping carts, since the set designer character in the play is a grocer.

Townspeople chatting over carts provide commentary, serving a function akin to that of the classic Greek chorus.

The actual designer is Michael Bantjes of Saskatoon, who oversaw the building of an ambitious set in sections at the farm workshops of several volunteers.

Wylie is choreographer for this year's extravaganza, playing at Biggar's Majestic Theatre July 27 to Aug. 11. The production is expected to be sold out for the town's millennium homecoming, Aug. 4-6.

The theatre was built in 1911, the

same year Biggar was incorporated as a town, Moir notes during a tour of the museum. "In 1911, there were 41 businesses here."

A showpiece of the museum, for which a large, new building was constructed in 1997, is a miniature version of the Majestic. The theatre display, a favorite of school tours, is complete with some of the original seats (which are surprisingly hard and narrow) and the player piano, purchased in 1914 for the silent films.

"The piano has been restored and it's so precious to us," Moir explains. "It was used until the 1930s."

Although there was an earlier outpost of the Northwest Mounted Police some 15 miles away, Biggar owes its existence to the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, which arrived in the district in 1907. Its director, William Hodgins Biggar, travelled on the new line the following year, and decided to name this spot after himself.

Bentley-Fisher cites the railway magnate in one number of the musical, where the town is described as "the prairie's major big, fat cat . . . founded by a railroad bureaucrat."

Grain farming and the railway line were the two foundations of Biggar. There is still a sense that the community has a grand destiny, with its wide streets and carefully laid out neighborhoods.

"The town was set up to be bigger than Saskatoon or Moose Jaw," the playwright notes. Although that didn't happen, its optimistic, self-confident spirit remains.

The most tangible evidence is in the loving preservation of the town's history, the artifacts contributed by citizens and displayed in the new museum, and the beautifully restored Majestic Theatre, continually in use for community events and movies.

Fittingly, both the museum and the theatre are central to the musical. As in

real life, the museum is presenting the play, and the action takes place at the theatre.

An unusual component of the play is that Bentley-Fisher does not shy away from controversial aspects of the town's past. His is a fond but not idealized vision of the community. He makes reference to today's rural/urban split and to the medicare crisis of the 1960s.

In incorporating another, unsavory chapter of Biggar's history, Bentley-Fisher was perhaps influenced by the apartment he was given, above the drugstore on Main Street. It was once the home of J.J. Maloney, head of the local Ku Klux Klan.

Bentley-Fisher recalls inquiring at the hardware store about getting blinds for the windows. The owner jokingly suggested sheets might be more appropriate, given the identity of the former tenant.

In one song in the musical, Klan members apologize for their intolerant behavior: "We'd like to say we're sorry, for such a sordid story."

Appearing as ghostly figures of the past, in their sheets and cowboy boots, they describe how they "galloped up and down, in freshly bleached attire; To keep Saskatchewan clean was our only real desire."

"You can't disguise anything in Biggar; it is what it is," the playwright says. "I think that's a positive thing, because there's a kind of energy."

Even though it didn't get there, he adds, there's a sense of Biggar wanting to fulfill its destiny as a grand place, comparable even to New York City.

Bentley-Fisher, the former artistic director of Saskatoon's Twenty-Fifth Street Theatre, decided just over two years ago that he wanted to be a writer.

Splitting his time between Saskatoon and San Francisco, he's been writing and performing short stories. The commission to write and direct the Biggar

Continued on page 6



Sheila Robertson

Choreographer Carol Wylie stands in front of the Majestic Theatre, built in 1911.



Kevin Bratigan

Shopping carts are a prominent feature in the play. Shown are Tom Bentley-Fisher and Angie Tysseland.

play gave him a unique opportunity to connect with his own past. His first eight years were spent there, living with his grandparents until his mother returned to collect him.

His grandfather, who was "something of a slum landlord," was blind, and negotiated Biggar's broad streets with a wheelbarrow. The writer has made note, in the play, of a figure wearing mismatched rubber boots and pushing a wheelbarrow.

His remembers his grandmother, a commanding presence, playing bingo a great deal, and in the musical a key character calls bingo numbers at the Legion every weekend.

"After living in England and Toronto, I came back 12 years ago to the West," says Bentley-Fisher.

The chance to spend some time in Biggar "is for me a real culmination," he stresses. "I've made an extraordinary circle with my life."

"I just do what interests me now, and this is a labor of love."

"New York is Big but this is Biggar" is not his first play, but it does mark the first time he has written lyrics.

Angie Tysseland, who composed the music, says he's a natural. "A real love of the Prairies is in the lyrics," says Tysseland, a performer and director of the Refiners Choir in Saskatoon. For her part, Tysseland wrote the score in one sitting, with a dashboard before her instead of a keyboard.

She was in her car, at Saskatoon's Diefenbaker Park, one chilly May morning. At the time, her cleaner was in her house and someone else was occupying her office at the church,

where she leads the choir. She needed to find a quiet place to concentrate.

"I think it's very hummable," she says of the music. "I wanted it to have a sophisticated flavor."

"I work quickly under pressure," she says. "I was doing this train song and a train went by on the trestle. Then a hawk landed right in front of my car. It made me feel I was in the right place at the right time. I didn't have to make any changes. The songs came out and stayed that way."

There are jazzy numbers, ballads, and "some country hoedown stuff," says Tysseland, whose involvement in the project is sponsored by the Biggar and District Credit Union.

She, too, is no stranger to small town life. She grew up in six little prairie towns as her father, a Lutheran pastor, moved from charge to charge. She took piano lessons, sang in choirs, and got an early start playing professionally, filling in for the church organist and performing at other events.

"I was only 11 when I started, so by the time I got to university I had eight years' experience," she says, adding, "Little towns can give great starts in the arts, because you perform so much. And the more you do it, the more comfortable you get."

"For most of my projects, I play piano, sing, direct, put posters up and pay the band," she quips. "I think it will be satisfying this time to just sit in the audience and watch."

Both Tysseland and Bentley-Fisher were attracted to the project by the challenge of working with a mix of pro-

fessionals and amateurs. Workshops and mentoring have created a good energy in the cast, they say.

There are about 30 people onstage and 20 others involved in the crew. Four actors are paid professionals, who are being billeted in the community for the summer. The rest of the cast are volunteers from the Biggar district.

Whole families are involved in "New York is Big but this is Biggar." For example, Wendy Boechler Andrews, her husband, Jack Andrews and their teenage son Brock, who live on an acreage near Wilkie, all have parts in the play.

Wendy takes the character of Queen Elizabeth II, playing a cameo role based on a royal visit to Biggar in 1959.

The Saskatchewan Arts Board task force of 1991 notes there has been a split between community performers and professionals, Bentley-Fisher says. "There shouldn't be; there should be opportunities to learn from each other."

He held a series of acting workshops in the spring, and many of the participants turned out for the auditions.

It took about three months for Bentley-Fisher to write the play, and now, in his director's chair at the foot of the stage, he's having to live with his earlier decisions. "I'm trying to be ruthless with the writer," he says with a grin. "My God, that man was a madman. I think he left the country."

It is exciting, he says, to be part of a community "that's willing to get to the edge, to take a chance." The production "is original, and it's risky."

Wylie says she hopes audiences will take away "some of the sense of joy about coming from a rural place."

Knowing the rules of any game is important if a person ever hopes to win. Few have bigger stakes than farming and the ever-popular marriage game. Wives everywhere will improve their odds of success by learning these few simple rules.

Rule One: While the average farmer can dismantle and then correctly reassemble a combine (with only 1,847 moving parts) he is, as a rule, unable to activate the dishwasher. Don't even expect it.

Rule Two: Most farmers will, at the drop of a hat, help the neighbor by welding that shaft, pulling out that stuck tractor, assisting the birth by the herd's wildest cow, and "lending" replacement shear pins. If you need help hanging a certain rod or installing a ceiling fan, check the yellow pages. Contractors first, divorce lawyers second, because after all, it is a busy time of year.



Rule Three: After a lot of rationalizing and, dare I say, some nagging, hubby agrees to leave the old homestead for some R & R. It may be a shopping trip, a family barbecue or a dance in town. He's all dolled up in his newest jeans and a brand new cap from the fertilizer dealer.

With a homing device NASA would envy, he zeroes in on the only other farmer at the "do." They while away the hours talking grain prices, the latest machinery breakdown and how the first snowfall will provide a welcome break from all that work. Gee, why didn't you think of getting him away from the farm for a day?

Rule Four: Farmers have been known to speak more tenderly to their favorite cow or trusty dog than to their mates. But then old Bossy was never expected to bring the big Phillips screwdriver, a half-inch socket, the can of WD-40 and a hot meal all in one

trip. Oh, and don't despair, it's only eight miles, round trip, to go back for any missed items.

Rule Five: There will be a crisis in the corrals within moments of plunking down \$50 for a perm. The situation will require pulling a toque over freshly coifed hair and racing madly around bunk and bale feeders in pursuit of some agitated cow. At bedtime he's sure to ask "Weren't you supposed to get your hair done today?" Reassure him the appointment is next week.

Rule Six: Most farm women are organized, efficient and well able to prioritize tasks. It's a God-given coping mechanism that has evolved. In the cave-dwelling days, all Mama had to do was cook berries and assorted wild creatures, over an open fire.

Today's woman juggles a full-time job in town, a son in hockey, a daughter in dancing, community commitments and a farmer/husband who needs her at his side.

Suggestions on how to make the most of her limited time are often ignored. The call of an auctioneer is so much more compelling. Readyng the combine, bins and grain trucks is put on hold because that cultivator could "go real cheap." Use this windfall of "free" time to do something for yourself — laundry, gardening, mending, cooking . . .

Playing by these rules, anticipating your partner's next move and remembering it's really just a game will ensure a happy, ulcer-free life.



Karen Morrison

Mark Sexton still has great affection for comic book characters.

Chess unbound

By Karen Morrison

Imagine being knocked out of play by a club-wielding Colin Thatcher or Blues guitar man Colin James. Or picture Tommy Douglas holding Grant Devine in check.

All is possible in Saskatchewan chess, a wheat board of a different kind hand-crafted by graphic designer Mark Sexton of Regina.

Strangely, this prairie chess set got its start overseas in Florence, Italy in 1984.

Sexton was studying there in his final year with the Ontario College of Art when a buddy created his own chess set to take to tournaments at the local bar.

"I thought that was neat and then I thought, why stay with traditional pieces, but adapt it," said Sexton. He went on to create sets featuring Frank's Herbert's *Dune* and *Star Trek*, pitting

Capt. James T. Kirk's crew against Jean-Luc Picard's.

The 41-year-old father of two has also rendered the *X-Files* and comic book characters, a throwback to his boyhood days and ongoing fascination with Marvel and DC Comics like Thor and Spiderman. (His sets can be viewed at <http://em.ca/mas/chess/sask/sask.html>)

Star Trek mug in hand, a David Letterman hairline visible through a closely shaved head, Sexton explained how the Saskatchewan pieces were originally created for an insurance calendar along with a watercolor painting. Neither made the final cut.

The chess set pits the proud against the not-so-proud. The proud royal pair include Olympic curling medallist Sandra Schmirler in her flaming red Olympic jacket and poor boy hat and

former premier and father of medicare Tommy Douglas sporting a bright green jacket.

Authors Gail Bowen and W.O. Mitchell serve as knights, grain elevators as rooks and modern-day RCMP in regal red serge and wide-brimmed hats as pawns.

Colin James was chosen as a bishop, simply because he is from the province, Sexton said. "I was looking for someone other than a pop star, but I couldn't find anyone so I settled on James."

Former Premier Grant Devine and a female Indian, representing the mistreatment of First Nations people, are the king and queen on the dark side. Also featured there as knights are buffalo, driven to near-extinction by hunters and settlers. A compilation of Conservative figures represent "A Tory in Disgrace" bishop.

Devine was a "no-brainer" for the not-so-proud half. Sexton moved from Wales to Ontario as a boy, starting a new life in Regina after Devine's reign. He knew little of Saskatchewan politics but quickly heard about the Devine years. "No one that I've met has anything good to say about him, regardless of their political colors," he said.

A "sodder," the home-steader's primitive first dwelling rounds out the set as rooks while pioneer Mounties in "bell hop-like" garb are the pawns.

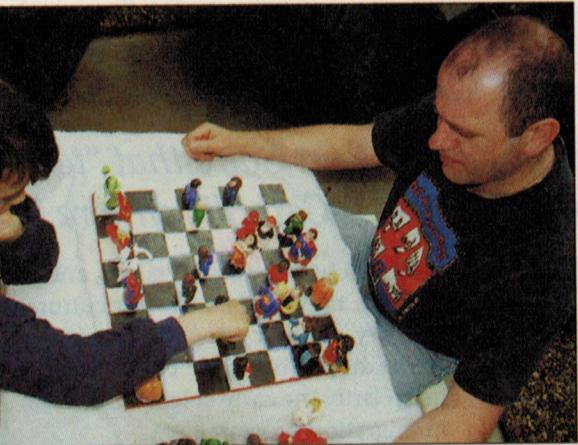
He chose "bishop" Sheila Coles first, because he enjoys her CBC morning show and chatty style. She featured him and the set on her radio show, and put out the call for bids for a charity auction.

"I stood back and waited for e-mails to arrive," said Sexton. "I got one."

And that e-mailer bought the set, which is now in the hands of Gail Bowen. Her daughter bought it as part of a fund-raising effort for the Sandra Schmirler Foundation.

Sexton's wife Catherine hosted a back yard barbecue for some co-workers last summer, which included Shannon English and his wife, Schmirler. "I was giddy as a school girl talking to her," said Sexton of their meeting.

Heartbroken over her death from cancer this spring, Sexton was espe-



piece its personality. "They never come out looking exactly as I planned they would."

Sexton's day job finds him creating trade show displays and posters. That leaves mainly weekends to attend to his finely manicured yard and his chess sets.

He is currently challenging himself to complete a set based on *A Child's Christmas in Wales* and tosses around ideas of creating a black and white set rendering actual black and white celebrities.

His biggest challenges in making sets are in deciding who or what to render and in which medium. "I fizz out of projects," said Sexton, noting that he's moved through clay and watercolor and oil pastel.

His art decorates the Sexton split-level, alongside Catherine's finely crafted quilts and needlepoint.

"Most artists are probably more serious about it," said Sexton, who sees value in all art forms.

"If you like to make pottery or paint pretty pictures I think that's great . . . no judgments, creating as opposed to destroying."

As for his chess playing, he admits it's "atrocious."

"I've been playing for years but I don't have the patience to think moves through and concentrate and so am frequently beaten."



Part of the Saskatchewan set. That's Tommy Douglas wearing the green coat.

Mark Sexton

The Belgian influence

It was said of Father Jean Gaire that "ten priests like [him] could build a Franco-Catholic empire in this country."

History by Pat Bowley

Like most of Western Europe in the late 1800s, the small, low-lying country of Belgium experienced a land crisis. Farmers felt the crunch most severely as cities encroached on their fields. Production fell and they could hardly feed their own families, never mind send produce to market. Forests disappeared to supply building materials and firewood became scarce.

Emigration seemed to be the best solution and Canada beckoned.

Within a few years of settling in Canada, many Belgians were integrated into Canadian society and only small pockets of their culture remained visible—one in Montreal and another near London, Ont.

After 1888, the Homestead Act offered free land to families to open up the Prairies. St. Boniface, Man., became the home of a small Belgian community. French was already spoken there, and most of the Belgians who settled in Manitoba were Walloons from the south of Belgium, whose mother tongue was French. This group founded Le Club Belge, or the Belgian Club, which was formally incorporated in 1905.

The remaining Belgians in Western Canada found themselves scattered throughout Saskatchewan and Alberta. They often assimilated into a local French-speaking population and were referred to as "French" as opposed to the more correct "French-speaking."

One immigrant who recorded his early years in Canada was Marcel Durieux. His journal has been translated and edited as *Ordinary Heroes. The Journal of a French Pioneer in Alberta* (University of Edmonton Press: Edmonton, 1980). He was born in 1889 in the French province of Hainaut, which is now part of Belgium.

As devout Catholics, he and his countrymen left a legacy of parishes

and churches across the Prairies, and as farmers, they shaped the agricultural identity of their adopted provinces. These distinctly ethnic characteristics help clarify the early Belgian-Canadian immigration process.

Durieux, 17, his father and his older brother Henri arrived at the port of Montreal in 1905. A third son arrived with his mother the following year and

were huge and well-suited to mechanization. The sparse population also necessitated labor-saving equipment.

In Belgium, agriculture focussed on dairying, and also on row crops like sugar beets, which maximized land use and took advantage of plentiful cheap labor for hoeing and harvesting. Belgian immigrants in Canada also concentrated on dairying and labor-intensive field crops.

The Durieux family was not typical in this respect. Marcel and Henri stayed behind in Manitoba to learn farm work and study English. Their father went on to Alberta to stake their claims near Calgary.

Henri had fallen off a hay wagon and severely injured his back. He went to recuperate at St. Boniface College. Marcel travelled to Alberta, where father and son built a crude house and scouted out sources of firewood before winter set in.

Winter was cause for concern. According to Marcel Durieux, not only was it colder than Upper Canada, but also longer, with fierce storms, bitter winds and heavy snows that covered the roads and any other landmarks. Without the help of their neighbors, the Durieux men would have frozen or starved to death during that first harsh winter.

Summer was very hot and suitable for agriculture. It is significant that until the 1910s, Western Canada did not experience any real drought conditions, and every autumn brought a bountiful harvest.

There was of course the free land: 160 acres or 64 hectares given to each male who had reached the age of 18. Most settlers tried to obtain a homestead as close as possible to the new CP Rail line. Also in its favor, Western Canada had "no diseases, no snakes, and no dangerous animals."

Perhaps one of the most important incentives was the freedom of speech and of religious belief that Canada



The three Durieux boys.

University of Alberta Press

boarded a train for Winnipeg. These so-called "immigrant trains" were equipped with cooking facilities and sleeping quarters. They were also used to transport Eastern Canadian farm hands to the West to help with harvest.

The Durieux family had not farmed before—Marcel was a mechanical draftsman who worked on locomotives.

Le Club Belge in Winnipeg records there were 21 laborers, four contractors, four florists, three farmers, two bakers, two bricklayers, two carpenters, one butcher, clerk, commercial traveller, delivery man, proprietor, restaurant keeper and stonemason.

The Canadian West was much different than Western Europe. The fields

offered. French clergy played a vital role in many colonization schemes, as names of many of the villages in Southern Manitoba confirm. French-speaking priests organized the relocation of families, neighborhoods and parishes.

A most effective way to attract newcomers was by publishing positive testimonial letters, written by successful settlers in their own language. At that time (1891), many immigrants had moved as far west as southern Manitoba, and several communities had sprung up—Oak Lake, Grande Clariere, Lourdes, Treherne and Saint-Laurent.

Other centres of Belgian and Swiss immigrants were Saint-Leon, Saint-Alphonse, Lac Francis, Clarkleigh, Seamo, Minnewaken and Lac Dauphin.

This phenomenon, called chain migration, was especially important in the colonization of Canada. Following the Red River Rebellion of 1869–70, French- and English-speaking Métis moved into Saskatchewan from Manitoba, to ensure the survival of their culture and settlements. The 1870 census of the Northwest Territories and Manitoba recorded almost 6,000 French-speaking Métis, 4,000 English-speaking Métis, and 1,600 Europeans.

The French language was well enough established that French-speaking immigrants could readily adapt and establish their own cultural community. One of the first Belgian communities in Saskatchewan was Hoey, which appeared between 1881 and 1884, south of St. Louis.

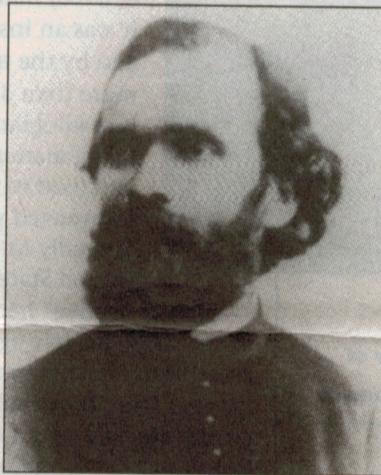
Jean Gaire was responsible for much of the colonization work in Saskatchewan. He had emigrated to St. Boniface from Alsace in 1888, but a visit to Saskatchewan convinced him of the suitability of that province for French-speaking settlers. He placed ads in French journals, and in 1892 and 1893, Cantal (parish of St. Raphael) and Bellegarde (parish of St. Maurice) were established.

Settlement in the southeastern corner of Saskatchewan expanded to include Wauchope (parish of St. Francois-Regis) by 1903, Storthoaks (parish of St. Antoine) and Alida by 1913, and Redvers. The original inhabitants included Métis, but most emigrated directly from Belgium and France.

These new settlements were often organized around a parish and a church.

About 15 kilometres west of Duck Lake, in 1902, the parishes of Ste. Anne de Titanic and St. Francois de Carlton were established. In 1910, the parish of St. Denis (due south of Vonda) was founded. Gaire was joined by many other priests. Most communities in the southeast and south-central regions were organized by Pères Royer and Gravel.

By the early 1900s, many immigrants who had originally settled in southern Manitoba were on the move. French and Belgian colonists from St. Claude, Haywood, Notre Dame de Lourdes and Bruxelles in Manitoba settled in northeastern Saskatchewan, near Zenon Park, St. Front, Perigord and Veillardville. Some farmers from Grande Clariere in



Father Jean Isadore Gaire.

Manitoba also moved west to settle in Cantal and Bellegarde.

Ponteix had its origins in 1907 with the arrival of Père Royer. It was called Notre-Dame-d'Auvergne at first but then renamed Ponteix after the founding priest's home parish in France. The first settlers came from Auvergne (France) and Belgium.

At the same time and to the north of Ponteix, Vanguard (and the parish of St. Joseph) and Pambrun were settled, partly by French-speaking farmers from the eastern townships of Quebec, partly by arrivals from the United States, and partly by Belgian and French immigrants. In 1909 and 1910, more French and Belgians located at Frenchville (another parish of St. Joseph) and in the district of Lac-Driscoll.

Alberta and British Columbia offered employment to immigrants who were

experienced miners. In 1890, Arthur Malacord (formerly of France) reported that his employment at a coal mine in Lethbridge earned him \$3 a day, with Sundays off. During the winter, he found work on the railroad, which paid \$1.75-\$2 a day. His co-workers included many French and Belgians.

In 1914, the First World War devastated Alberta, where the population consisted mainly of young men of military age. Many returned to Europe to fight for their motherland. The Durieux brothers, whose parents had died several years earlier, all enlisted. Jean, the youngest, was killed. Marcel, a victim of poison gas, spent the rest of his life in France. Only Henri returned to Alberta, but he later abandoned the farm.

Dairying flourished in southern Manitoba, where the Red River Valley was suitable for grazing and the production of hay, and the urban population around Winnipeg provided a ready market for dairy products.

Besides dairying, Belgians were attracted to the Canadian West as a possible suitable location for growing flax; Belgian women were world famous for lace-making with fine linen thread.

The sugar beet industry in Canada owed its beginnings to American, German and Belgian investors, and to Belgian field workers. Belgian beet fields were ravaged by both wars.

The price of beet and cane sugars were driven sky high. In 1925, the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company brought Belgian sugar workers to work at their refinery in Lethbridge. During the Second World War, further shortages led to sugar rationing in Canada. Following the war, more beet sugar refineries were built in Alberta.

The provincial Sugar Beet Growers Association, assisted by the federal government, attracted experienced Flemish beet workers with additional promises of year-round employment for at least one year. At Winnipeg, dairy farmers turned to growing beets on a crop-sharing basis to supply the new Manitoba refinery.

The fact that the Belgian immigrant numbers were small only added to the ease of assimilation into a French population. In the cultural and ethnic mosaic of Western Canada, the Belgians have kept a low profile. ■

To 2,4-D OR NOT TO 2,4-D

By Sara Williams

In looking back, I've often thought that I learned as much if not more about the practical side of horticulture by working summers at the University of Saskatchewan's Garden Line than I did in the more formal classroom.

Although much of it dealt with the "What's wrong with my....?????" side of gardening, there was the more positive side of identifying an unusual perennial from a much travelled leaf fragment, or helping a client select a particular plant for a difficult situation.

Dispensing pesticide information took up a great deal of our time as it does today. But there was a difference. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, it was done with a much more cavalier attitude. Our professors instructed us to "spray with malathion" (substitute chlorpyrifos, diazinon, or a dozen other products as appropriate) and although safety and label directions were strongly emphasized, there was perhaps less attention paid to cultural controls for insect pests or the sharp side of a hoe or hand pulling for weeds. Yet even two decades ago, more birch trees seemed to suffer from an overdoes of cygon than from birch leaf miner. It often occurred to us that the "solution" could be as bad as the problem.

Some things don't change. Patricia Richardson, who supervises Garden Line, has noted a sharp increase in the number of plant samples suffering from 2,4-D damage arriving at her



Signs of 2,4-D damage

office door. She suspects that consumers are not paying close enough attention to the label directions, or the product's residual life is longer than usual because of the cool weather. It may not be breaking down as quickly as usual.

Introduced in 1944, 2,4-D was the first of the "phenoxy" (short for phenoxyacetic acid from which it is derived) herbicides. It was an instant hit and by the mid-'70s, more than 32 million kilograms were being manufactured and used in 1,500 formulated products annually in the United States.

It is a "selective" herbicide in that it is effective against broad leafed plants but not grasses. Thus, it can safely and effectively be used for dandelions in lawns or against a number of broadleaf weeds in grain crops.

When applied to the foliage, it is absorbed and translocates or moves to all tissue throughout the plant including the roots. This makes it extremely useful against perennial and annual weeds.

How does 2,4-D work? It is an artificial growth hormone that acts in a similar fashion to a group of plant growth regulators called auxins. It affects cell division in a manner that results in prolonged abnormal growth, often twisted and distorted, and stimulates changes that are characteristic of maturity and death. Within seven to 10 days of application, tissues collapse and wither and the plant dies.

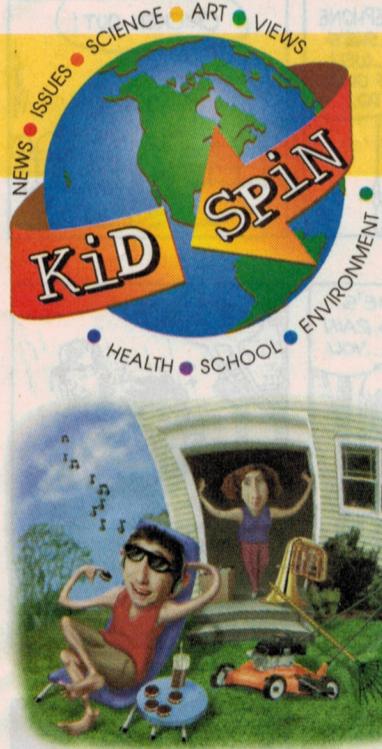
The abnormal twisted growth is called "epinasty" or

"epinastic growth." Some plants are much more sensitive to 2,4-D than others. Tomatoes in the vegetable patch and Manitoba maples in farm shelterbelts will exhibit signs of epinasty after contact with only trace amounts of 2,4-D. These are called "indicator plants" and are an indication that 2,4-D has been used. While the Manitoba maples almost always recover, tomato plants can be killed or severely set back.

Read and follow label directions. Do not apply more of the product than is indicated. You're much more in control if you apply 2,4-D when it's calm and under low pressure with large droplets. During hot weather, it may be more volatile and likely to drift. A fine spray under higher pressure on a windy day is much more likely to drift onto "non-target" plants. Take particular care with hose-end applicators that are marketed more for ease of application than controlled application.

While 2,4-D is "selective," one should not give too much credit to its selectivity. It is not capable of differentiating between a dandelion or a petunia, or lambs quarters and a tomato. Both have broad leaves. For that reason, never use 2,4-D within a flower bed or vegetable garden. Remember the sharp end of a hoe.

Garden Line is a public service (306-966-5865) offered by the University of Saskatchewan. ■



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Just in time for SUMMER

mowing, gardening, cleaning — are a good way to both help at home and earn money.

Some of her peacekeeping tips:

- Find something to do together (it's a bonding thing). Consider something you both enjoy. Shoot some hoops or rent a movie to watch together.

- Give your parents a break. Though you may be away from school all summer, most parents are working, which leaves them little time to enjoy the season. Consider giving your parents a summer break by being more resourceful. For starters, instead of insisting your parents chauffeur you to a friend's house or to swim lessons, consider asking for a ride with other friends or riding your bike.

— KRT

Lisa Simpson play?" (saxophone) and tough ones like, "what is Apu's last name?" (Nahasapeemapetilon)

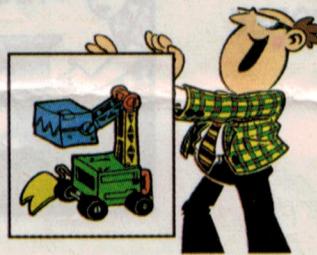
TIP 2: DON'T SKIP THE BATHROOM!

You're at a gas station. You're wondering whether you should hit the bathroom or hold out. Stop debating. Make the restroom trip (especially if you've had a Big Gulp in the last hour).

TIP 3: BE PREPARED!

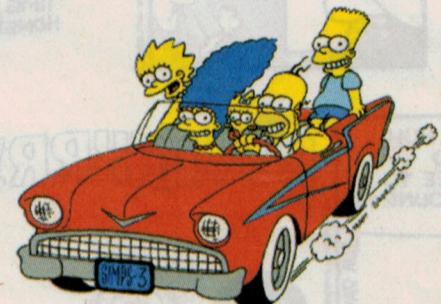
Remember to pack critical stuff such as batteries for the CD player and a pillow, in case you want to catch a nap.

— KRT



KIDSPIN inventor contest

Do you have some great original invention brewing in your brain, something that would make life around the farm a whole lot easier? Submit a brief description (under 200 words) telling us how your invention would work along with a picture drawn on plain white paper. (Please, don't send in an idea for something that already exists. Make something up, the more fantastic, the better.)



Tips for fun family travel

We piled 10 kids into a van and drove 960 kilometres in 16 hours. Why, you ask, would we torture ourselves?

We wanted to find out firsthand what it takes to survive a long road trip. This is our best advice if you're heading out with the family:

TIP 1: CREATE YOUR OWN FUN!

We had no shortage of great games, thanks largely to kid creativity. Caitlin made her own version of "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" and Matt made up a "Simpsons" trivia contest that kept everyone busy for an hour — he asked questions like "what instrument does

All entries must be received in our office by Sept. 15 and must include your full name, age, mailing address and a daytime telephone number on the back. Entries cannot be returned. Send your entries to KIDSPIN's Inventor Contest (our addresses are at the top of this page.) T-shirts and book prizes go to the most inventive in age categories 5-8, 9-11, 12-14 and 15-18. Good luck!

Gimme a (summer) break!

You're out on the hammock, Smash Mouth blaring through the headphones, a bag of Oreos within arm's reach. No schedule, no algebra, no plans. The perfect summer scenario. Pass the sunblock.

Your parents, on the other hand, have a scenario that looks something like this: Feed the chickens, weed the potato patch and babysit your younger cousins while everyone's out in the field.

It's enough to make you want to go back to school.

Before panic sets in, consider the advice of psychologist Harriet Mosatche, co-author of "Too Old for This, Too Young for That! Your Survival Guide for the Middle School Years."

She says parents and kids can co-exist — and peacefully — during summer break as long as both parties are willing to communicate and compromise.

"Parents and kids have different expectations," Mosatche says. "If you don't sit down and talk, summer comes along and you find you're not on the same page."

While jobs and camps can keep kids busy over the summer, it's the time at home that can cause some of the biggest strains on kid/parent relationships.

Mosatche says home chores — lawn

PEANUTS
Classics



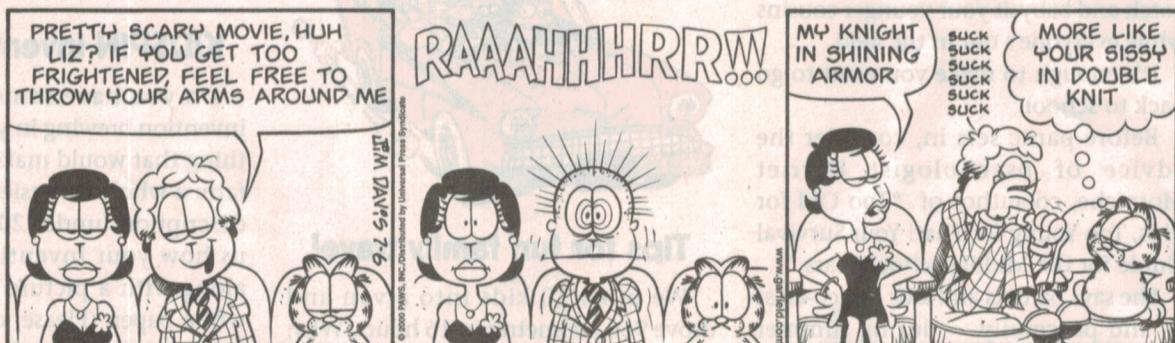
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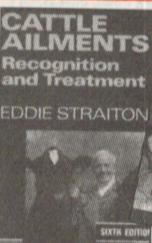
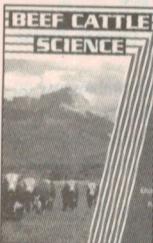
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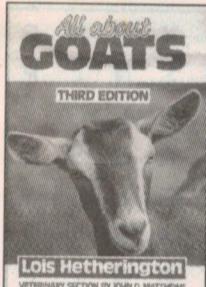
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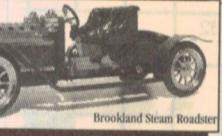
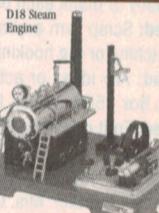
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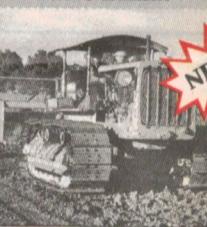
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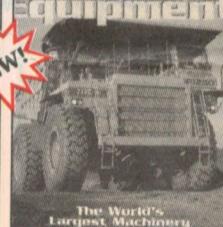
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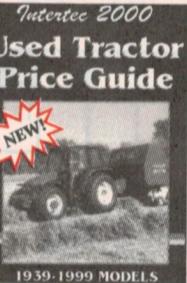
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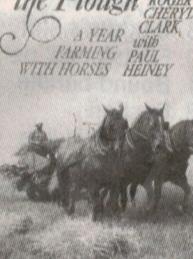
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